



# Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez

## CONGRESSIONAL REPORT CARD

---

Education Update for Orange County Schools

April 2000

---

### School Safety Update

Dear school administrators, faculty, staff, parents and students:

Of all the concerns our students, families and educators express to me, school safety is often the most urgent. During my visits to our local schools, I have discussed this issue with many of you. One thing we can all agree on is that keeping schools safe means more than installing metal detectors and checking lockers.

Our schools must have access to resources that will help you create secure learning environments. The cooperation of school personnel, students and their families, as well as others in the community is what leads to real security.

I represent Orange County on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, which is currently studying the renewal of our federal school safety program. I am bringing several issues to the panel:

- # Traffic safety education – So many local parents have expressed concern at the unacceptable rates of pedestrian injury and fatality in our community. What is most tragic of all is that so many children are at risk while walking or biking to school. I am committed to ensuring that children can arrive at school safe and ready to learn and travel home again.

Many of our schools are working to ensure that our children know how to deal with the realities of modern traffic. I have introduced legislation to ensure that federal school safety funds can be spent on this important purpose. I have enclosed some federal publications and instructional materials that you may want to use in your school.

- # Smaller, safer schools – Parents and educators intuitively know that children are often better off in smaller schools. Too many young people find themselves an anonymous part of an overwhelmingly large school environment – alienated and isolated, rather than connected to teachers and administrators who know them in a caring environment.

This is very difficult when typical high school enrollments reach 2 to 3 thousand students. In fact, approximately 70 percent of American high school students attend schools with 1,000 or more students, despite the evidence documenting the benefits of smaller schools.

This is very difficult when typical high school enrollments reach 2 to 3 thousand students. In fact, approximately 70 percent of American high school students attend schools with 1,000 or more students, despite the evidence documenting the benefits of smaller schools.

I am advocating legislation to ensure that interested schools or districts can apply for funding to help them reduce school size through a variety of methods, such as schools-within-a-school, academy models or innovative counseling programs. So I've also included information about current opportunities available through the federal Smaller Learning Communities Program.

- # Keeping violence out of our classrooms – As you know, schools are required to expel students for one year if they bring a firearm to school. In the 1997-98 school year, educators made 3,507 expulsions. Unfortunately, fewer than half of these students were referred to alternative education placements.

I have pressed the Committee to help school districts establish or improve alternative placements for these students, so the problems they brought to school do not become problems of the community. Parents and families will have the peace of mind that comes from knowing that violent children can be removed from classrooms and placed in schools designed to address their needs. The students who cannot attend mainstream schools and their families would not be left to their own devices

I believe that these initiatives are an important part of a comprehensive approach to school safety, one that includes the efforts of federal, state and local education officials as well as many others. To that end, I have enclosed various federal publications that may be of use to you.

In this folder you will find information on the U.S. Department of Education and its grant programs, especially those pertaining to school safety, and an important publication about safe educational environments. You will also see the Internet addresses and phone numbers you can use to obtain further information and additional resources. In addition, I have included information about traffic safety materials produced by federal transportation agencies that may be of use in your classrooms.

I have been privileged to meet with so many local school officials, teachers and students during my work in Congress, and look forward to continuing my school visits and our work together. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of service to you.

Very truly yours,



Loretta Sanchez  
Member of Congress

